

Rogers

A STUDY OF
UNIVERSITY GARDENS, NAT'L Defense housing
PROVO, UTAH for Geneva Steel.

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Architecture 527

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UTAH VALLEY

Utah County has never been accused of being a highlight in the drama of American architecture. However, it has had its share of handsome buildings, some of which are still standing. The Utah State Mental Hospital started in 1869 is a hauntingly beautiful reminder of Gothic revival architecture so prevalent in the mid-19th century. The Provo tabernacle, completed in 1883, at which the 27th President of the United States, William Howard Taft, spoke in 1909, is still used extensively today. The Brigham Young Academy, a monolithic example of late 19th century architecture on the 5th North block of University Avenue was built in 1892. It was abandoned during the 1970's but has since attracted investors and renovators from all over the world. Andrew Carnegie donated \$17,500 to Provo City in 1906 for construction of the small but stately Romanesque Provo City Library upon condition that city government would spend 10% of that sum annually for maintenance of the building.

Generally speaking, Utah County's economy (per most of Utah) has always lagged behind the rest of the nation during the entire 20th century. Two new elementary schools opened in Provo in 1938. No others were started until a decade later. The 55 bed Utah Valley Hospital started operation with 38 doctors on its present day Provo location in 1939. Large trucks for the systematic disposal of refuse were purchased by Provo City in 1941. Sewer lines were extended to areas on the fringes of existing Provo City limits. Due to automobile congestion in downtown Provo, parking meters were installed in 1942. The WPA projects of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, such as construction of the Deer Creek Dam at the top of Provo Canyon, provided some Utah County inhabitants with jobs, however, very little of consequence, financially speaking, occurred in Utah County until the U.S. entered the war in December 1941.

PROVO CITY AND WORLD WAR II

Steel production in the United States increased several times it's pre-war production rate between December 1941 and August 1945.

As soon as the United States joined the war, the federal office of Production Management requested that U.S. Steel submit a plan for an extensive steel operation. In April of 1942, five months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the federal government began construction of the \$200,000,000 Geneva Steel Plant located nine miles northwest of Provo, Utah. A good labor supply, adequate water and easy accessibility to the three main ingredients for steel production; coal, iron and limestone, made Utah county a profitable locale for pig iron operations prior to World War II.

"The high quality and dependability of Utah County labor has won nation-wide recognition. Many workers own their own homes... They do not move about from job to job but become are permanent citizens who are interested in their work and in the community where they live. Population is 96.5% native white; 3.4% foreign born white; negro 0%."¹

Factors in the governments decision to build the largest steel making facility in the central and western United States on a plot near Utah Lake were:

- 1.) An inland location safe from enemy assault.
- 2.) Location close to the west coast.
- 3.) An already overtaxed railway system on the east coast.
- 4.) Perception of shipping through the Panama canal as extremely vulnerable.
- 5.) Convenient rail transportation through Utah.²

¹. Provo. A Good Place To Live, Provo Chamber of Commerce, 1948

². The Economic Impact of Geneva Steel On Utah County L.R. King April 1972

The Geneva Plant was to be built on, and take it's name from, the 1500 acre site where the old Geneva Lake Resort, built during the boom times of the 1890's, stood.

This tremendous increase of steel-related industries gave Utah new importance as an industrial center in the United States. Thousands of people moved into the Provo area during World War II. There was a time Provo claimed to be the West's fastest growing city. Over 10,000 workers were on the payroll at the Geneva plant during construction. By February 1944 the plant was in operation and within months was at full capacity. Geneva Steel shut down shortly after the bombing of Nagasaki in August 1945 and was virtually closed until June 1946 when the U.S. Steel Company bought the Geneva plant from the Defense Plant Corporation of the government. After a short retooling period Geneva was up and running at full capacity filling peacetime orders.

1948 estimates for annual payroll of the Utah County steel production community were around \$18,000,000. This included Columbia Steel Company, located in Ironton just south of Provo, which had been in continuous operation since 1923. While it was considerably smaller and less diverse than the Geneva operation, wartime employee estimates hovered between 500 and 600.

Pacific States Cast Iron Pipe, Kaiser-Frazier and several other steel related industries already located in Utah Valley expanded their existing operations and a host of other companies relocated because of Geneva Steel. Provo city's "million dollar" municipal airport still boasted the states longest runway as late as 1948. Hercules Powder, forerunner of Hercules Aerospace in S.L.C., located in Spanish Fork Canyon and a number of other defense-related industries also geared up during the war effort.

In 1941, \$470,000 worth of building permits were issued by Provo City. That figure increased to \$600,000 in 1942. In 1943, bolstered by the economic helping hand of the U.S. government and its steel producing plant, Provo City issued a record number of building permits totalling over \$3.4 million. That figure was not matched until the late 1950's. That 580% dollar value increase for total building permits issued during 1942-1943 has never been equalled in Provo City during any other two consecutive years.

The 10,000 construction employees at Geneva between 1942 and 1944 equalled more than half of Provo's 19,000 people. The total assessed evaluation of the 1942 Provo City tax base of \$9.6 million paled in comparison to the anticipated \$200 million price tag of the completed Geneva Plant. Even though an estimated 10% of all Utah County residents left the area to serve in the armed forces during World War II this sudden influx of government subsidies and attending companion industries obviously had a dramatic, positive effect on Utah Valley's economy.

THE "GARDEN CITY" OF UTAH

In an 1888 Provo City Chamber of Commerce brochure, Provo was called the "Garden City" of Utah. Lush foliage irrigated by the Upper and Lower East Union canals flourished on the east side of Provo. Downtown business property was going for \$100 per square foot. Brigham Young Academy boasted 500 students upon opening in 1892. The miracle of modern transportation moved people "effortlessly" through the valley. The history of trains in Utah county has been an interesting one.

The Provo tracks of the Salt Lake & Utah Interurban were abandoned in February 1946. Probably due to extensive automobile use, however it appears trains never really made that much money in Utah County. In 1890 a steam-powered streetcar starting at the corner of University Avenue and Center Street taking passengers west to

the old Utah Lake Resort was operating successfully. It's operation was short-lived however, due to the Panic and resulting financial reverses of 1893 and a flood that essentially wiped out the Utah Lake Resort. The electric trolley, having a slightly different route, replaced it but not until 1914.

Present day construction crews from Geneva Rock Products replacing the roadway on University Avenue uncovered the abandoned electric trolley tracks the first week of May this year. Removing the asphalt and preparing to pour all new concrete, they were unpleasantly surprised to find the tracks and ties eighteen inches below road grade preserved just as they had been covered up in the late forties.

"Sure they were still there," retorts Dale Despain, Assistant Provo City Planning Commissioner in 1945, "we had some federal guys come from Washington D.C. and try to talk us into pulling up the steel tracks to reuse for the war effort, but Provo City couldn't afford it."³

THE BIRTH OF UNIVERSITY GARDENS

O. R. Taylor and Dennis B. Wheeler, developers from Sacramento, California,
must must have had their ears to the federal train tracks. Word of the largest steel plant
in the Western United States going in at Provo, Utah was first announced February 4,
1942. Construction of the steel producing facility began in mid-April of that same year.
Huge trailer parks for families and a number of quonset hut barracks for single construct-
ion workers cropped up along the Utah Lake shoreline in the spring of 1942. Farmland
surrounding Provo had been going for about \$200 per acre prior to the announcement of
the Federal governments plan to build the steel plant in Utah County. After the announ-
cement average price of the same farmland had risen to \$1000 per acre. During the

³. Telephone Interview, May 1989; Dale Despain, Asst. Planning Dir., Provo City, 1941-47

following months a number of low income subdivisions were built in Utah County from Spanish Fork in the south to American Fork in the North. Most of them spawned because of the hope for a continued need for plant employee housing. Developers Taylor and Wheeler bought twenty six acres of farmland in northeast Provo from three established Provo families. On June 5th, 1943 the Provo City Planning and Zoning Commision approved the first of two plat plans submitted by Taylor and Wheeler. The second, sub-division plat B, was approved June 22nd 1943. University Gardens, as it was named by developers Wheeler and Taylor, is presently bounded by Provo's Kiwanis Park at 800 North on the North and a McDonalds and 7-eleven on about 5th North towards the South. On the west, it starts on 9th East and continues east all the way to the foothills of the Wasatch Range. Even today there are no homes built any farther east in central Provo.

Kiwanis Park has been in the news lately. It is a favorite spot for Brigham Young University students trying to catch a little sun after the rigors of daily studies. The local residents (some of them University Gardens homeowners) are uncomfortable with the proximity of these "scantily-clad" coeds and their equally scantily-clad male suitors and have petitioned the Provo city Commission and B.Y.U. administration several times for some type of intervention.

"Our school children are seeing conduct that they would be prohibited from seeing on TV or in the movies." says University Gardens resident Craig Carlisle.⁴

B.Y.U. officials may have offered some timely advice to students at the University's weekly student forums but to date no formal restrictions have been set.

Although the University Gardens sub-division was in the most north-easterly

⁴. Daily Herald, Provo Utah, May 17, 1989, pp A-2

quadrant of Provo in 1943 it was still only a mile from downtown Provo. During war-time it was only a twenty minute walk from Provo City's electric trolley running up University Avenue and about half an hour from the Denver & Rio Grande Salt Lake and Utah Interurban station located at second west and third south.

No covenants or building restrictions were or are in force. Only those that the owner/developer/builder enforced upon himself. There were no blacks in the neighborhood because there were no blacks in Provo, or Utah County for that matter. There is no evidence of racial discrimination, but the 1948 Provo Chamber of Commerce brochure touting Provo as a "good place to live" does mention twice that the 1940 U.S. Census bureau found the Utah County population to be 99.9% white and no negroes.

Construction progressed smoothly but did not go as quickly as involved financial concerns would have liked. The first item of business was the piping and covering of the existing Lower East Union open canal running through the entirety of the subdivided acreage. Provo City more than likely helped with construction costs of the canal covering. Several infants have drowned in the Union canals during the twentieth century. The canal's origin is the Provo River at the south end of what is now the B.Y.U. motion picture studio property. Still in use today, Watermaster Stan Roberts ensures that the canal provides service to the land owners south and west of the Utah State Mental Hospital. Thirty-six inch galvanized pipe was laid down the middle of proposed street locations to accommodate the relocation and covering of the Lower East Union Canal.

Streets were laid out parallel and perpendicular to the existing Provo City "gridiron" street layout. An offset of half a block between plat A and plat B of the two University Garden areas provides relief from the surrounding and older gridiron layouts. Not until the "Oak Hills" development was built several years later did Provo City have any

curvilinear sub-divisions. The main artery to the University Gardens area was 9th east. Wise planners had already designed it to serve a growing community. It was 5 rods (82.5 feet) wide. All streets within the sub-division itself were fifty feet across.

University Garden blocks were long and narrow with a utility easement running right through the middle of each, bordering the rear property lines of all homes. Each lot, including corner lots, were uniform in size ranging from 6500 square feet to 5700 square feet. Frontages averaged sixty-three feet and depths averaged about 104 feet. Developers, Taylor and Wheeler, submitted a plan to the Provo City Planning and Zoning Commission with the east-west "half-block" streets named by letters and the north-south half-block streets named after East Coast Institutions of higher education. (see plat in appendix.) No doubt to facilitate the atmosphere of a college environment.

*Amex. 104 ft 15
Richmond Plunk
not as wide*

Minutes of the Provo City Commission and planning & zoning meetings taken during the World War II years were unavailable for this research project. During relocation of city organizations from the former Provo City Post Office to the new "Provo City Center" in 1972 Provo City paperwork was scattered throughout various government complexes. The meeting minutes and other records have not been catalogued to date. As a result, no documentation is available at this time to help us understand discussions concerning the city's growth and related concerns during this period. Provo City's reasoning behind the name changes of the 1943 University Garden streets are unknown but it is assumed to be for the purpose of eliminating the confusion of duplicating nearby Salt Lake City's identical street names.

A COTTAGE FOR THE WORKING MAN

A wide cross-section of people moved into homes in University Gardens during
it's early construction. Provo was a city of varied interests and occupations. However,

most of the early University Garden homes were purchased by the developers target group: Geneva construction and other defense-related workers who wanted a little distance from the Geneva Plant industrial center and were tentatively planning to stay in the area.

The homes were small and inexpensive, yet well built. In 1943 the first homes started at \$4300 each. After the war in 1946, with the advent of VA financing, they were going for \$5400 each. The plumbing fixtures of all those built during, and shortly after, the war were pewter, steel being rare and expensive. Ceramic tile tubs and basins were installed instead of porcelain. University Gardens and other sub-divisions going in after the war took advantage of the extended Provo city sewer system put in place in 1941. The convenience of gas stoves were afforded those who bought homes after 1949.

All the homes were built from identical floor plans, a three bedroom california bungalow with no entry to speak of, and the kitchen in the rear. About half the homes are reversed, that is, a mirror image of the others (see floor plan in appendix). The typical floor plan is 1100 square feet, all on one floor, with a small basement directly under the kitchen. Dimensions of the basement are the same as the kitchen. The basement entrance is outside, just off the back door.

All exteriors of the original homes were done in shingle siding , either wood shake or asbestos. Originally all homes were painted in pleasant, pastel shades. It was interesting to note that most all of the wood shake shingle sided houses generally needed painting while most residents of homes having asbestos shingles for siding considered them almost maintenance-free.

Besides color, roofline was the most noticable distinguishing characteristic of the original homes. All of them had a relatively low pitch. But some had "hips" at one or both

ends while others had simple gables and others sloped to all sides.

It appears that all of the original homes built are still standing. But very few of them still have both the original facade and overall dimensions. ^{ing} Owe^d to Utah County citizens creativity or lack of the same, modifications range from removal of the window shutters to entire second level additions. Aluminum siding became popular during the 60's and was used mostly on the wood shake shingle homes to help reduce maintenance. Several of the homeowners have added brick veneers. Some have broken up the front elevation with exterior stone on the entries. Originally some homes were built with one-car garages some were built without. It's not known how that affected the price.

None of the old-time residents recall any type of architectural expertise being on site during any phase of construction. But several of them do remember a local structural engineer drawing up the plan and structural specifications that were used for all the homes.

PROVO CITY HOUSING COMPANY

In 1942 the Brigham Young University student population was only about sixteen-hundred. Most employees of the University who could afford a home opted for something with a little more space and style.

Zoning restrictions precluded the renting of University Gardens homes to students until 1951 when newly installed University President Ernest L. Wilkinson appealed to City Fathers for rezoning. Provo City east side residents opened their homes to student renters and the University population grew to five times its original size during the Wilkinson administration.

"Apartment type housing was generally looked down upon by people you know," says former Provo Mayor, Verl Dixon, "it took 'em a while to get used to the idea."⁵

The Provo City tax base, utilities and retail sales were stable and increasing during the war years. Sale of homes in the University Gardens area were just taking off when the war came to an end and the Geneva plant was effectively shut down. With fewer construction and production workers in the area, University Garden home sales slumped. Money became tight as a speculative market did not produce the anticipated number of home buyers. Karl and Anna Bandley, along with the other families selling farmland property to Wheeler and Taylor had done alright, but the price the two developers had paid was evidently a bit too steep for the profit they accrued. It is unclear as to when the original developers bailed out. Provo City Abstract of Title books indicate that many of the finished homes that had remained unsold after the war were purchased by The Provo City Housing Company. Details of exactly who was involved with this organization are sketchy. One name is at the bottom of all paperwork for mortgage transactions on file at the Utah County Records Office.

George S. Balliff, respected citizen and practicing attorney, was living in Provo during the war. He had been retained by Wheeler and Taylor when they first came to Utah Valley. George Balliff represented and counselled them during the initial land procurement process. He probably saw the handwriting on the wall; the plant was closing but would certainly start up again. He also realized that during the twelve months following VE and VJ day our boys would come trickling back and need a place of their own to start a family. He established the Provo City Housing Company. Although not affiliated with Provo City government it provided the means by which University Gardens

⁵. Telephone interview with Verl Dixon, May 1989; Provo City Mayor 1962-71

continued to develop.

CONCLUSION

Utah County was a hot piece of real estate during World War II, due almost entirely to the government built and owned Geneva Steel Plant. Two developers from northern California saw the opportunity to capitalize on the boom and bought twenty-six acres in northeast Provo. They had built homes on well over half the lots by the time the war ended and Geneva Steel stopped production. The exact reasons are not clear but the original developers quit and went home leaving a few enterprising mortgage companies and local lending institutions to buy up the remaining homes and empty lots. With the boys returning from the war and Geneva once again running at full capacity Utah County population and home sales went back up. By 1950 the entire sub-division had been developed, a spacious L.D.S. chapel on the west boundary had been dedicated and two new schools had been built in the vicinity.

Homes in the University Gardens sub-division have served a wide cross-section of the Provo populus as starter homes. New University professors, some who later moved to larger homes in more prestigious areas, returning veterans using VA and FHA financing and Geneva workers pleased with the quiet university setting.

Today the area is a little different than an early aerial photograph (see appendix) would lead you to believe. University Gardens, at least during the spring and summer months, lives up to it's name. An inordinate amount of trees line the sidewalks bordering the tiny front lawns. Most of them large, deciduous trees all but obscuring a view of the residences from the street.

Overall most residents consider it a "nice little neighborhood with good people."⁶

⁶. Personal interview with Homer Whitney, May 1989; it is his home form which the floor plan in the appendix was drawn.

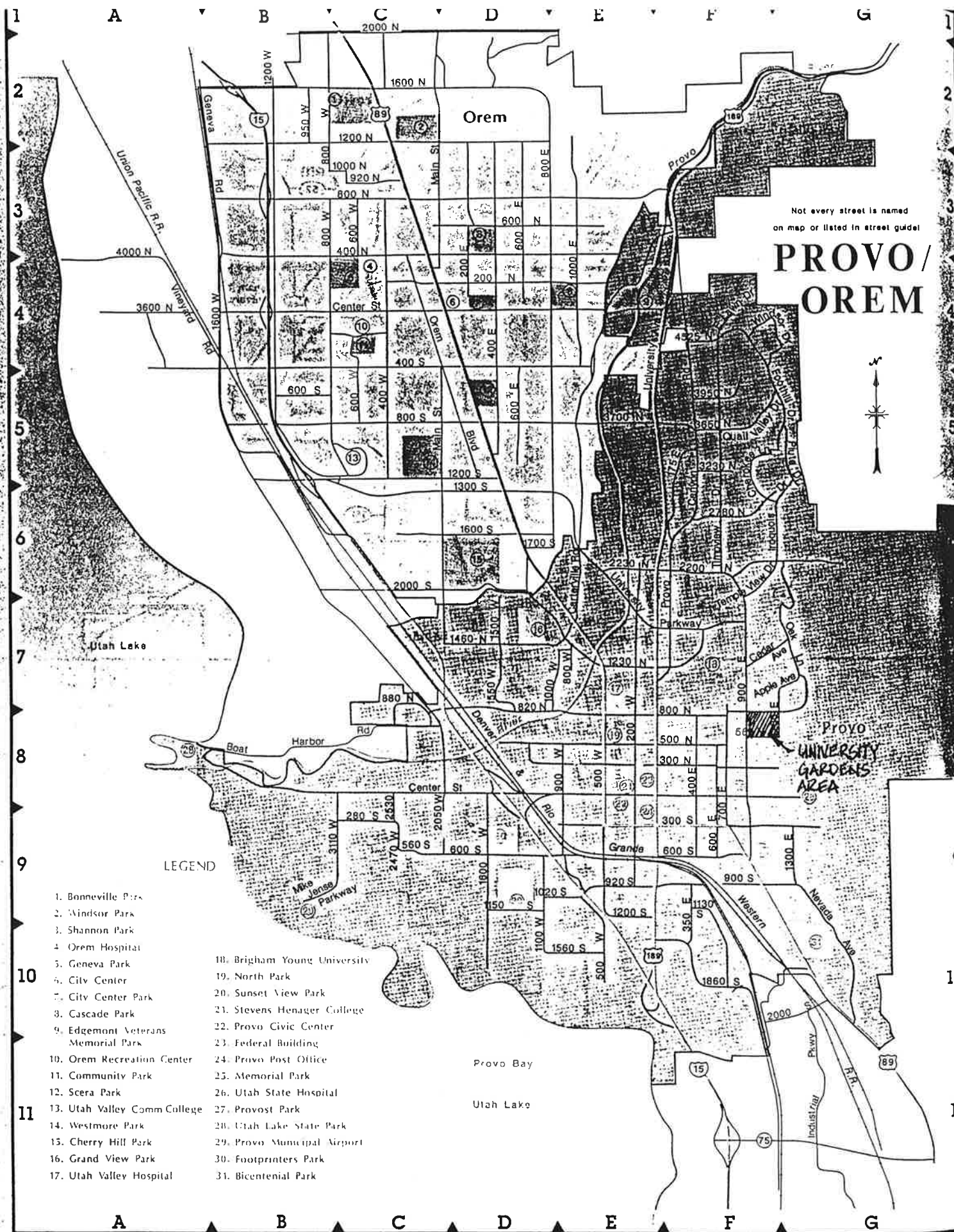
Not every street is named
on map or listed in street guide!

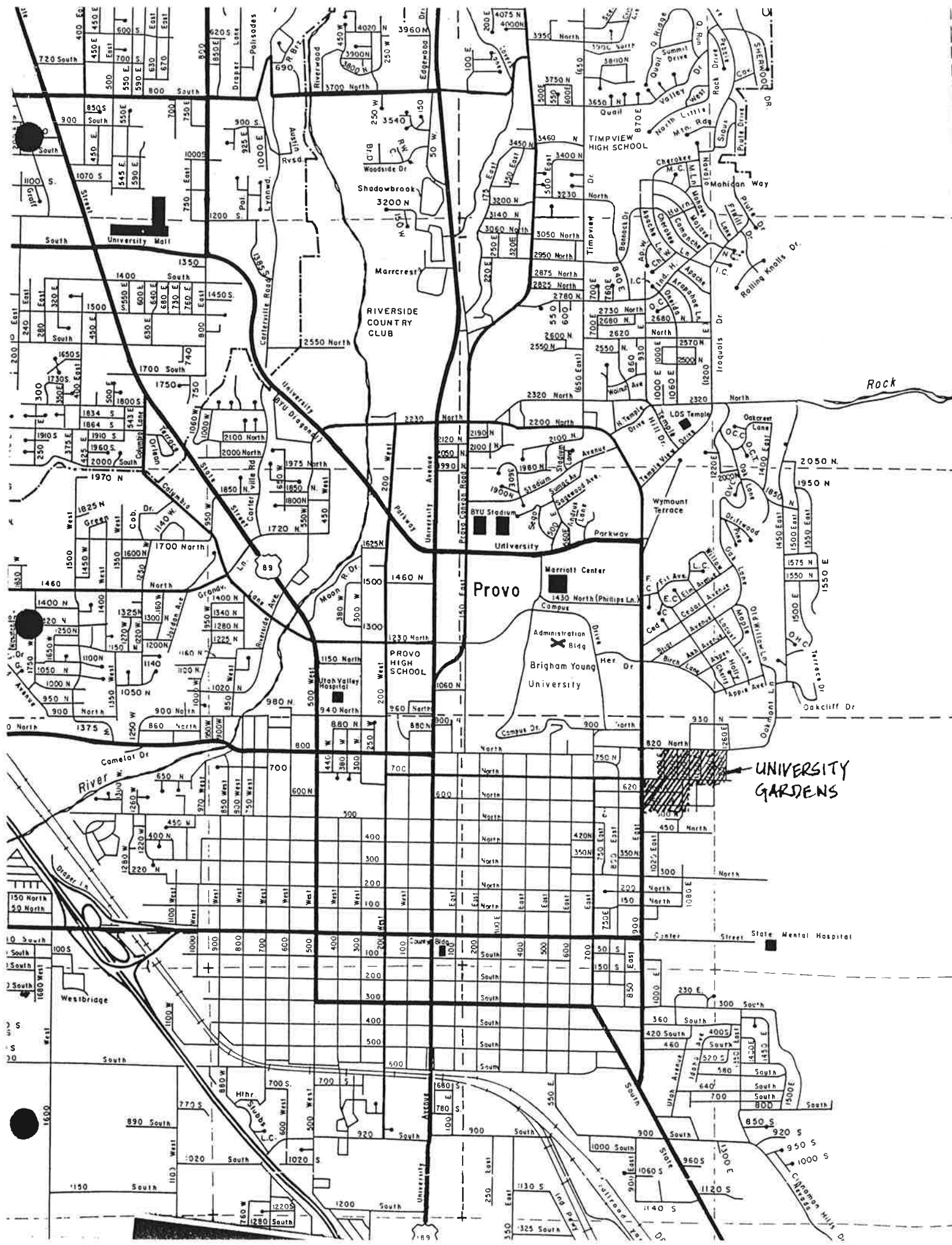
PROVO/ OREM



LEGEND

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Bonneville Park | 10. Brigham Young University |
| 2. Windsor Park | 19. North Park |
| 3. Shannon Park | 20. Sunset View Park |
| 4. Orem Hospital | 21. Stevens Henager College |
| 5. Geneva Park | 22. Provo Civic Center |
| 6. City Center | 23. Federal Building |
| 7. City Center Park | 24. Provo Post Office |
| 8. Cascade Park | 25. Memorial Park |
| 9. Edgemont Veterans Memorial Park | 26. Utah State Hospital |
| 10. Orem Recreation Center | 27. Provost Park |
| 11. Community Park | 28. Utah Lake State Park |
| 12. Scera Park | 29. Provo Municipal Airport |
| 13. Utah Valley Comm College | 30. Footprinters Park |
| 14. Westmore Park | 31. Bicentennial Park |
| 15. Cherry Hill Park | |
| 16. Grand View Park | |
| 17. Utah Valley Hospital | |





Provo

UNIVERSITY GARDENS

RIVERSIDE COUNTRY CLUB

PROVO HIGH SCHOOL

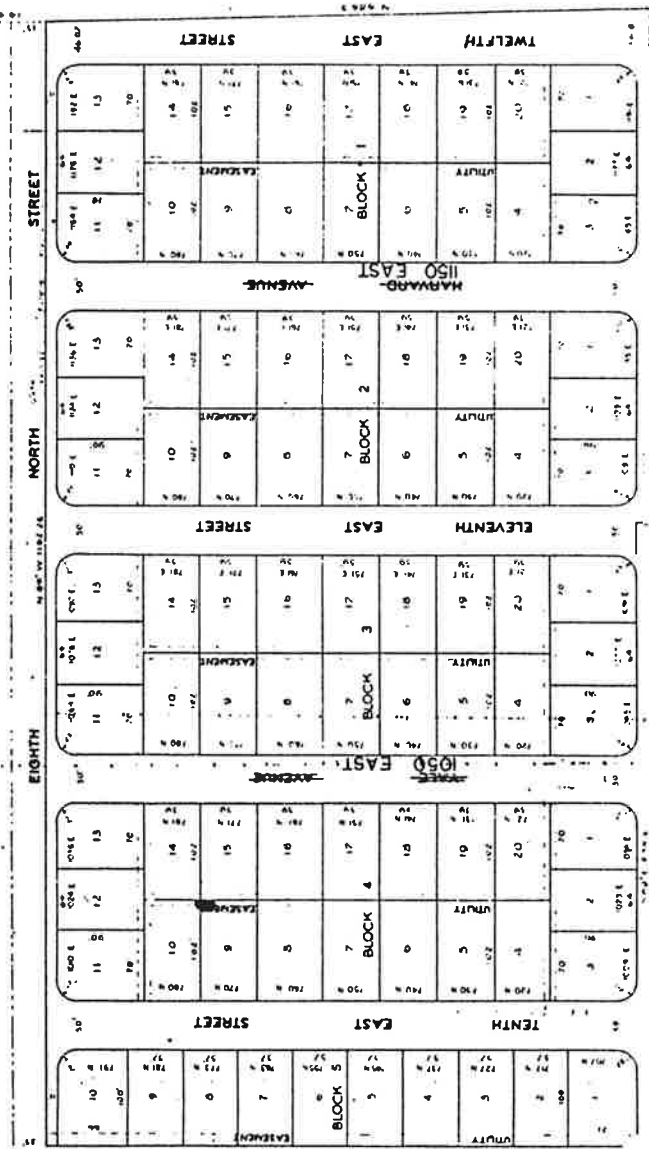
Brigham Young University

Marriott Center

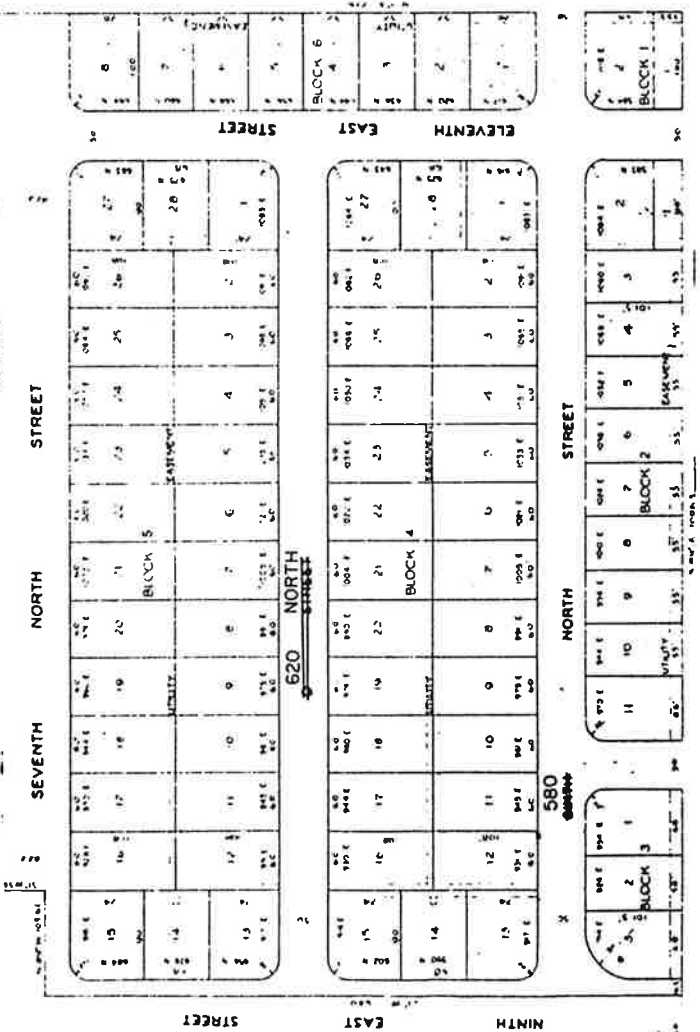
University Mall

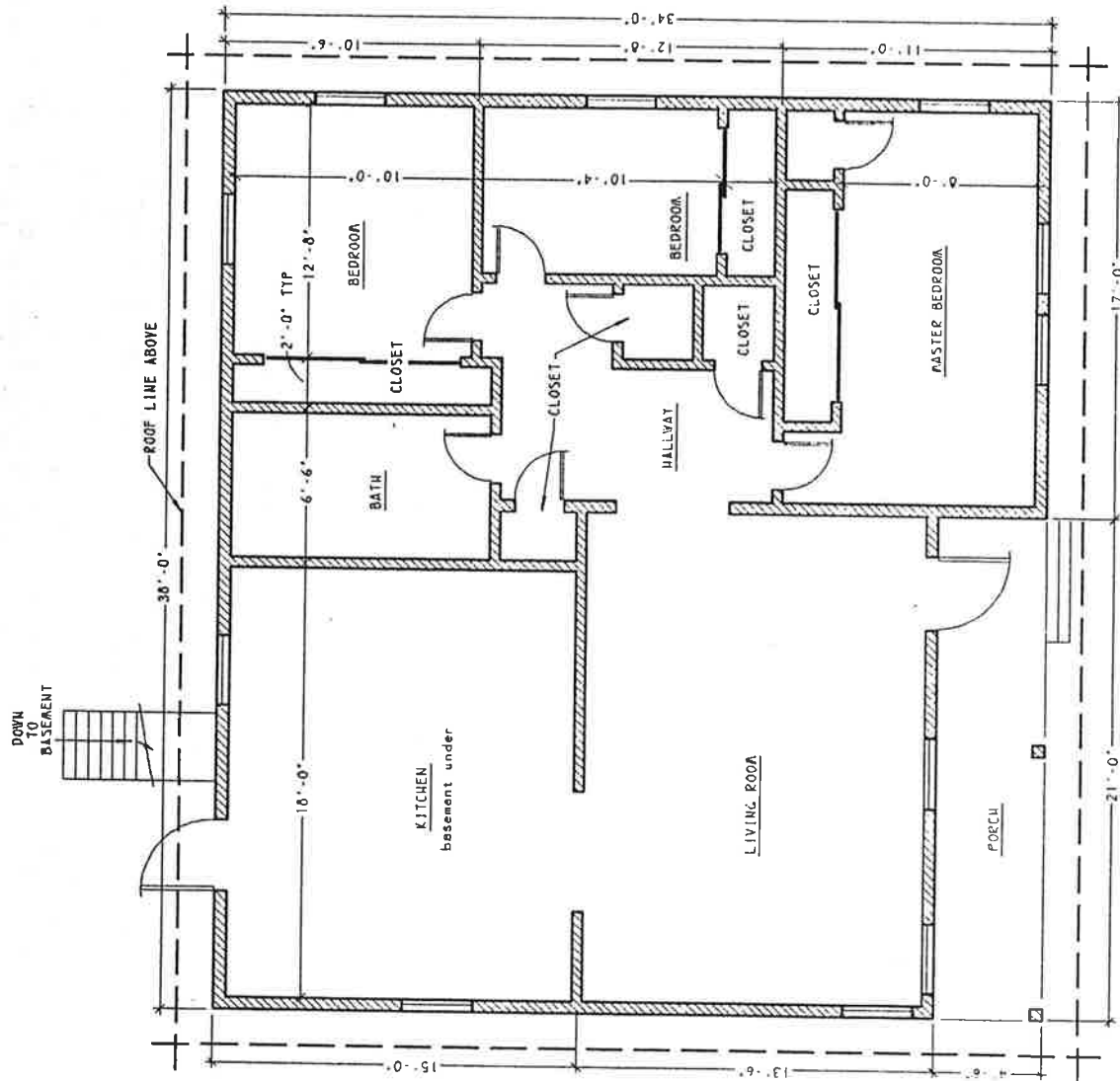
TIMPVUE HIGH SCHOOL

State Mental Hospital



PLAT A
UNIVERSITY GARDENS
SUBDIVISION
PROVO CITY UTAH
SCALE 1 INCH = 60 FEET





TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: NONE

TABLE 2

POPULATION - JULY 1ST

	Utah County	Per Cent Change	Per Cent of State	State of Utah	Per Cent Change
1940	56,900		10.31	552,000	
1941	56,300	-1.0	10.22	551,000	-0.1
1942	55,900	-0.7	9.72	575,000	4.3
1943	64,700	15.7	10.25	631,000	9.7
1944	68,200	5.4	11.27	605,000	-4.1
1945	63,900	-6.3	10.81	591,000	-2.3
1946	71,300	11.5	11.18	638,000	-0.3
1947	75,800	6.3	11.92	636,000	-0.3
1948	78,000	2.9	11.94	653,000	2.6
1949	79,000	1.2	11.77	671,000	2.7
1950	83,000	5.0	11.93	696,000	3.7

Source: Population Projections, University of Utah, December, 1967, p. 98, 12, 13.

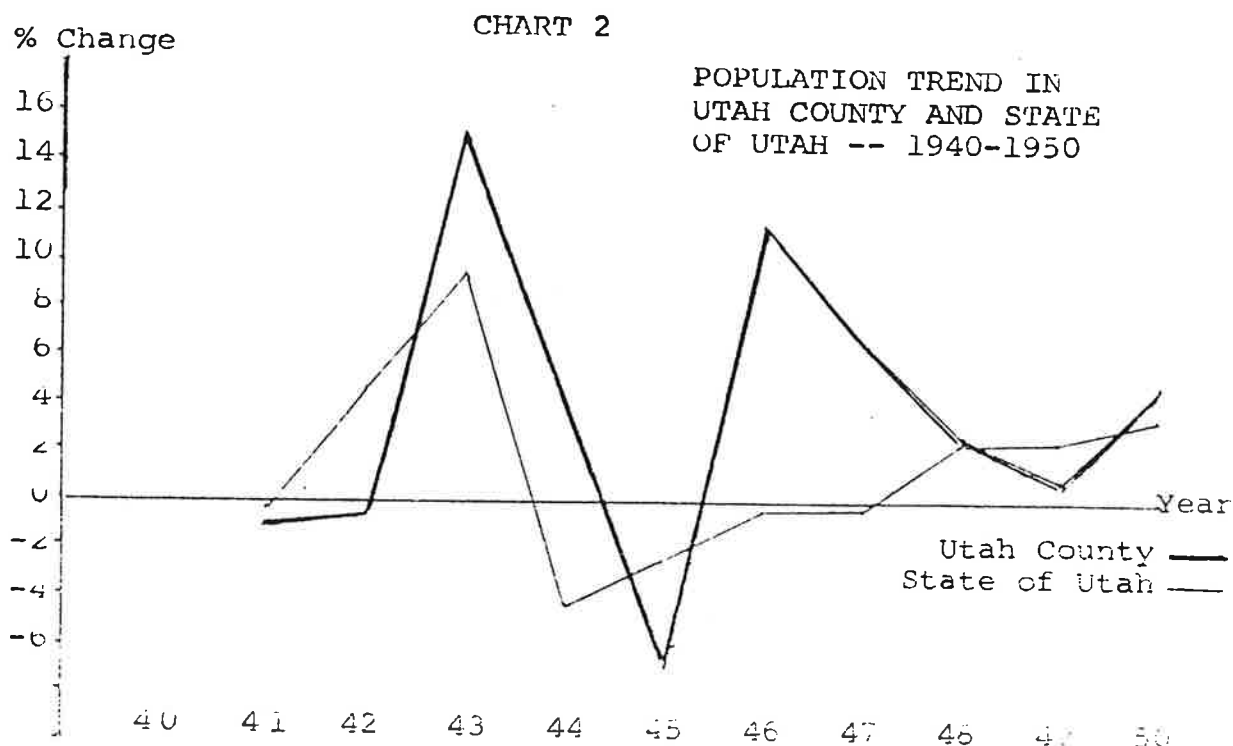
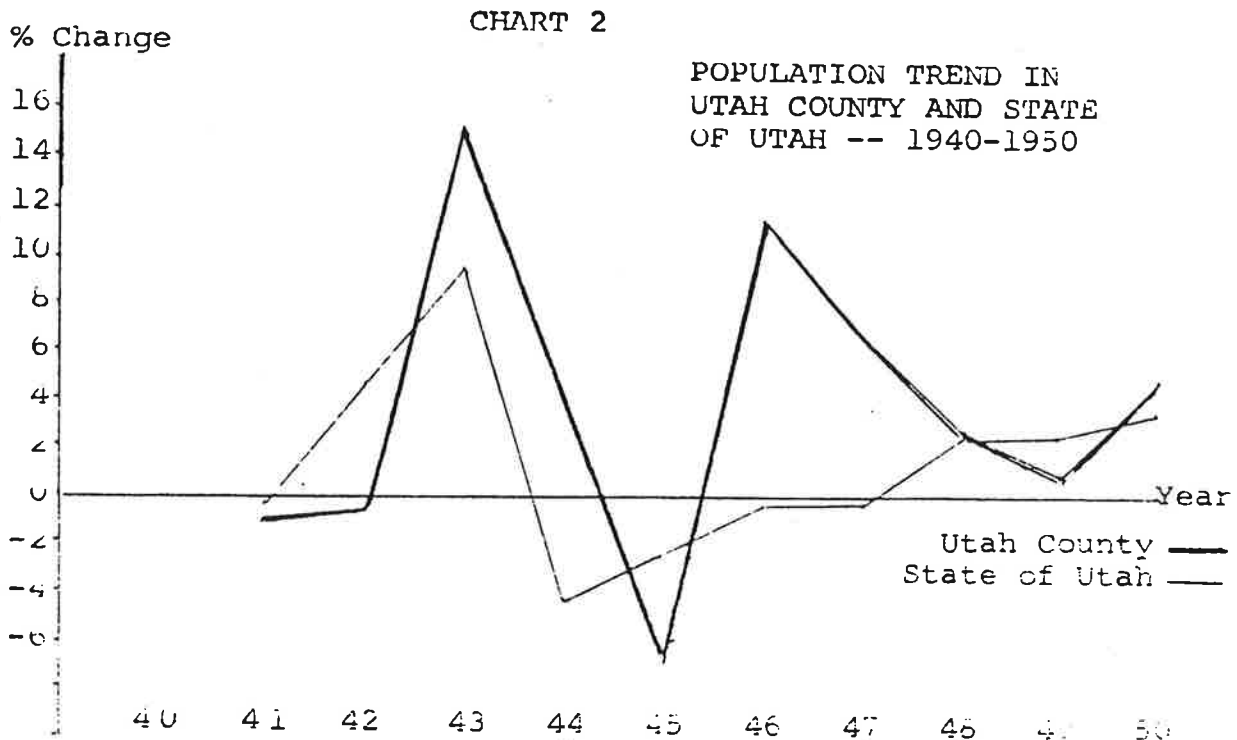


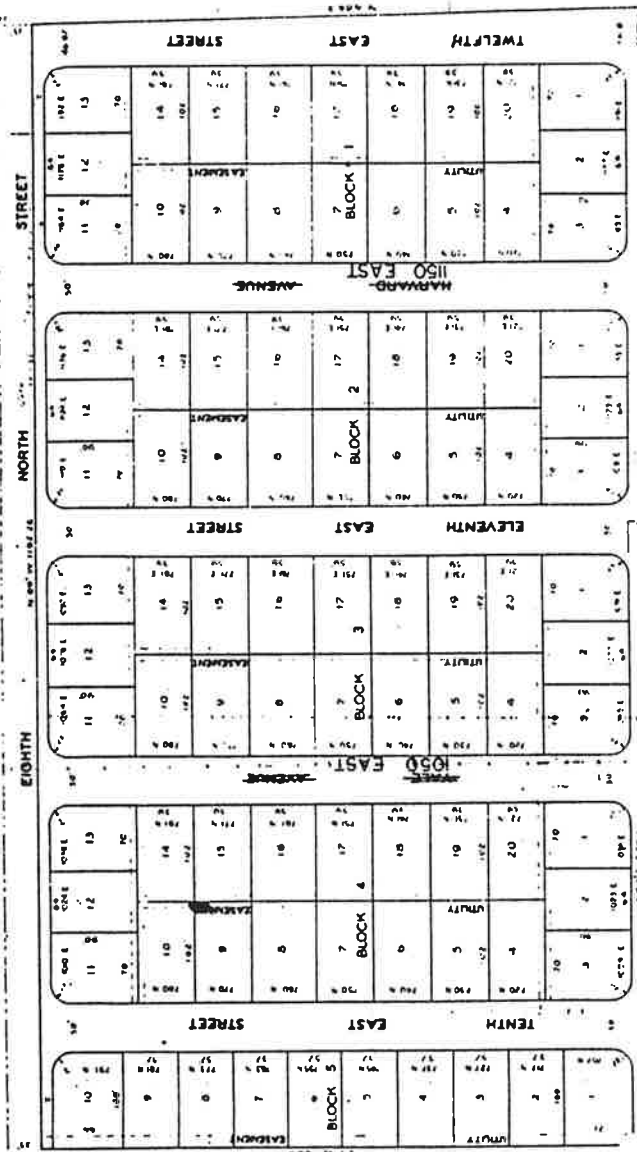
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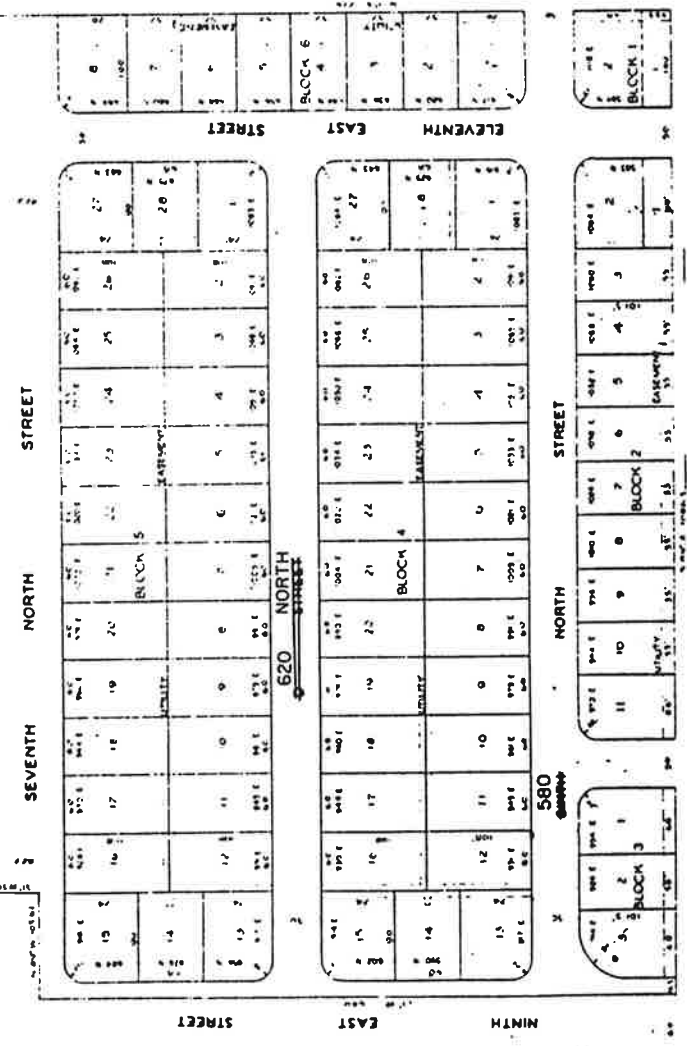
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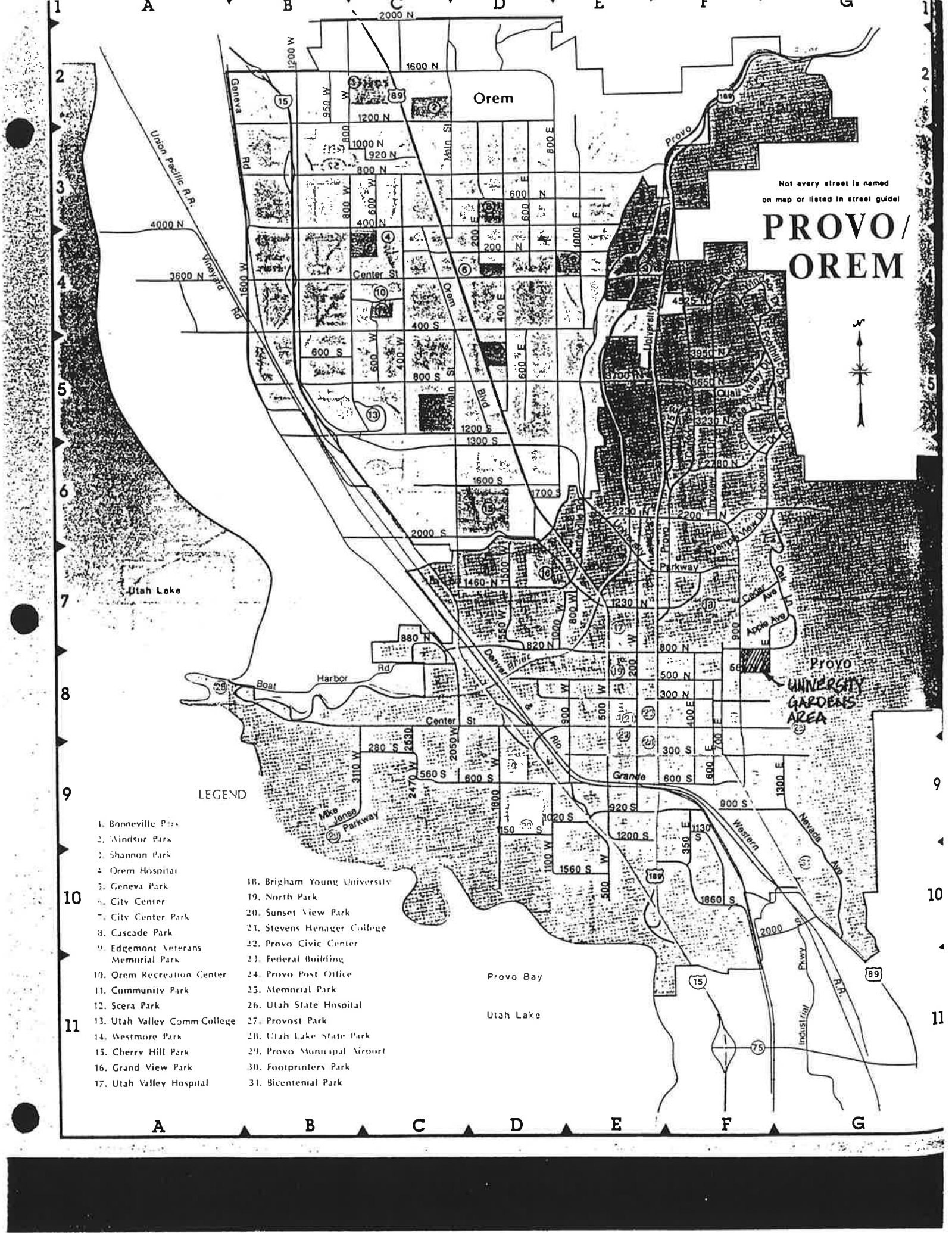
Source: Population Projections, University of Utah, December, 1967, p. 98, 12, 13.





PLAT A
 UNIVERSITY GARDENS
 SUBDIVISION
 PROVO CITY UTAH
 SCALE 1 INCH = 60 FEET





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on map or listed in street guide

PROVO/ OREM

LEGEND

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Telephone Interview with Verl Dixon, May 1989
Former Mayor Provo, 1962-71

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Provo City Planning & Zoning Director 1945-49

Telephone Interview with George Smeath, May 1989
Provo City Planning & Zoning Director 1942-45

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